

# Can the American Buffalo Stage a Come-Back?

By H. O. BISHOP

IN THE old frontier days of the western section of the United States it was generally estimated that from ten to twenty million head of wild buffaloes roamed up and down through this country and Canada.

In 1889 these millions of valuable animals had dwindled in numbers until there were only 1,091 of them left in all North America, distributed as follows: 550 in Canada, 85 roaming wild in the United States, 200 in the Yellowstone Park, and 256 held in captivity in various parts of the country.

At that time it looked as if it were only a matter of a few years when the buffalo, once the pride of all America, would become extinct.

But a few public-spirited men of the type of the great Dr. W. T. Hornaday got busy and made a noise that was heard by Congress and a lot of individuals. These men pointed out the utter shame and disgrace of permitting such animals to become mere memories of a glorious past.

The American Bison Society was organized, composed of big-hearted and get-busy men from all sections of the country. This organization, working in harmony with the United States Department of Agriculture, the Canadian Government, the New York Zoological Society, and many private individuals, undertook the colossal job of not only rescuing the buffalo from extinction, but again making him one of the big economic assets of this country.

In this laudable undertaking they are succeeding most admirably, as is attested by the fact that on the first of January of this year there was a total of 8,473 pure-bred buffaloes in North America, as follows:

Captive in the United States, 3,303; wild in the United States, 90; captive in Canada, 4,580; wild in Canada, 500; total, 8,473.

The captive buffaloes are located in the different states at the present time as follows:

California—Pasadena, J. H. Henry, 4; San Francisco, Golden Gate Park, 30; Santa Cruz, 3—total, 37.

Colorado—Castle Rock, Richard Dillon, 12; Denver, Mountain Parks, 23; Durkley, B. A. Dawson, 4; Fort Garland, W. B. Turner, 173—total, 212.

Washington, D. C.—National Zoological Park, 21.

Georgia—Atlanta, Department of Parks, 2.

Idaho—Pocatello, S. M. Nixon, 8.

Illinois—Bloomington, Miller Park Zoo, 1; Chicago, Lincoln Park, 22; Freeport, Freeport Zoo, 2; Graniteville, A. W. Hopkins, 2; Naposet, E. F. Norton, 1; Paris, Reservoir Park, 2; Rushville, Warren R. Leach, 8; Rockford, City Park Zoo, 1—total, 39.

Indiana—Fort Wayne, J. H. Bass, 1.

Iowa—Davenport, City Park, 9; Iowa Falls, City Park, 3; Keokuk, Rand Park, 1; Keota, J. O. Singmaster, 13; Keota, C. A. Singmaster, 11; Laurens, H. L. Ryon, 2; Spirit Lake, John Reinhart, 19—total, 58.

Kansas—Topeka, Gage Park, 7; Wichita, City Park, 4—total, 11.

Kentucky—Junction City, Joe E. Wright, 2.

Louisiana—New Orleans, Department of Conservation, 3.

Maryland—Baltimore, Druid Hill Park, 7.

Massachusetts—Auburndale, Norumbega Park, 1; Boston, Franklin Park Zoo, 3; Springfield, Department of Parks, 7; West Brookfield, H. E. Richardson, 7; West Brookfield, Indian Rock Farm, 9—total, 27.

Michigan—Detroit, Bell Isle Zoo, 6; Oscoda, Carl E. Schmidt, 2—total, 8.

Minnesota—Hibbing, Board of Park Commissioners, 3; St. Paul, Department of Parks, 3—total, 6.

Missouri—St. Louis, Forest Park, 6.

Montana—Butte, Columbia Gardens, 5; Kalispell, Estate of C. E. Conrad, 73; Moiese, Montana National Bison Range, 298—total, 376.

Nebraska—Crete, Anton Vavra, 4; Lincoln, Antelope Park, 2; Omaha, Department of Parks, 11; Valentine, Niobrara Reservation, 21—total, 38.

New Hampshire—Newport, Blue Mountain Forest Association, 43; Tilton, William H. Moses, 2—total, 45.

New York—Brooklyn, Prospect Park, 1; Chazy, W. H. Miner, 11; New York City, Central Park, 4; New York City, Zoological Park, 19; Rochester, Seneca, Durand, Eastman Parks, 6—total, 41.

North Carolina—Andrews, George G. Moore, 7; Asheville, Pisgah National Forest and Game Preserve, 6—total, 13.

North Dakota—Fort Totten, Sullys Hill National Park, 7.

Ohio—Burton, W. B. Cleveland, 3; Cincinnati, Zoological Garden, 14; Cleveland, City Park, 1; Toledo, City Park, 2—total, 20.

Oklahoma—Bliss, Miller Brothers, 62; Cache, Wichita National Game Preserve, 119; Oklahoma City, Wheel City, State Game Preserve, 24; Oklahoma City, Wheeler Park, 2; Pawnee, Major G. W. Lillie, 84; Sand Springs, Zoological Garden, 2; Sulphur, Platt National Park, 3—total, 296.

Oregon—Pendleton, The Round-Up, 1; Portland, Washington Park, 4—total, 5.

Pennsylvania—Allentown, General Harry C. Trexler, 51; Philadelphia, Zoological Society, 18; Pittsburgh, Highland Park Zoo, 4—total, 73.

South Dakota—Ashton, James M. Norwood, 4; Custer County State Game Preserve, 64; Fort Pierre,

Estate of James Philip, 825; Hot Springs, Wind Cave National Game Preserve, 55—total, 948.

Tennessee—Memphis, Overton Park Zoo, 3.

Texas—El Paso, City Park, 3; El Paso, E. W. and R. E. McKenzie, 48; Goodnight, W. J. McCalister, 157; Hartley County, George T. Reynolds, 6; Kent, The Rock Pile Ranch, 5; Stamford, R. V. Colbert & Son, 11—total, 230.

Utah—Salt Lake City, John E. Dooley, 300.

Washington—Seattle, Woodland Park Zoo, 5; Spokane, City Park, 4; Tacoma, Metropolitan Park, 10—total, 19.

Wisconsin—Madison, Dr. Corydon Dwight, 2; Milwaukee, Washington Park Zoo, 5—total, 7.

Wyoming—Cheyenne, Charles Irwin, 2; Padlock Ranch, Lee Simonson, 5; Thermopolis, Thermopolis Hot Springs Reserve, 4; Worland, State Reserve, 10; Yellowstone National Park Tame Herd, 412; Yellowstone National Park Wild Herd, 90—total, 523.

It will be seen that South Dakota leads with 948 animals. The other six leading states being Wyoming, 523; Montana, 376; Utah, 300; Oklahoma, 296; Texas, 230; Colorado, 212.

In these days of expensive steaks and chops and meats of all kinds, almost any one might be pardoned for reproachfully pondering over the inexcusable waste



Buffalo, or Bison, on National Bison Range, Montana.

and greed of those who preceded us by a few generations. The greater proportion of those millions of buffaloes that roamed our plains and valleys were ruthlessly slaughtered for their hides, which after tanning brought fancy prices as "buffalo robes."

Many hunters whose appetites were of the dainty and puny variety shot thousands upon thousands of buffaloes, and after removing their tongues, left the carcasses lying on the grass to be devoured by buzzards and wolves.

Another class of hunters killed them just for the mere fun of killing, taking neither hide, tongue nor carcass.

All this slaughter was carried on when it was known that the buffalo was the one thing absolutely needed by the thousands of Indians of the country as a source of supply for their food, clothing, shelter, bedding, saddles, rope and various other uses. With this natural supply of all these things taken away from them, the Indians quite naturally became a burden on the government, and ever since then it has been necessary to supply them with beef, clothing and other articles at great expense to the taxpayers. Right now, during this good year of 1920, Congress had to appropriate between thirteen and fourteen million dollars which is being expended through the Bureau of Indian Affairs.

It is up to the present and future generations to assist in retrieving the mistakes of their forefathers by

development of that phase of animal industry within the next few years. This cross of buffalo and cow is called "catalo." It was given that name by the late "Buffalo" Jones, of Kansas, one of the most famous cattlemen that ever twirled a lasso. It will be observed that in coining this name Mr. Jones used the first syllable of cattle and the last syllable of buffalo.

One of the important differences between a cow and a buffalo is the fact that a buffalo has 14 ribs, whereas a cow has but 13.

Mr. Charles Goodnight, of Texas, is admittedly the most successful raiser of catalo in the world. He has experimented along that line for many years. In speaking of Mr. Goodnight's catalo development, Mr. Martin S. Garretson, Secretary of the American Bison Society, says: "The many years of continuous experimenting in the production of catalo places Colonel Charles Goodnight—known throughout Texas as the Father of the Panhandle—at the head of the list. Colonel Goodnight is a broad-minded man, a deep thinker and one not easily discouraged. With him it is no longer an experiment but an accomplished fact. For forty years he has given his time and means without stint, first to create, then to improve. The result is he has established a breed that will not only reproduce its kind, but one far superior in many ways to any other breed of cattle."

"In this new breed, Colonel Goodnight has succeeded in incorporating all the good qualities and hardness of the buffalo, also the extra fourteenth rib, the same as in the buffalo. In regard to this feature, he states that it varies greatly. A few of the higher grades have the extra rib. Time and patience alone can add this perfectly, and only as the blood becomes purer will it become thoroughly established. The advantage of this extra rib is not only evidence of greater hardihood, but lengthens the carcass, fills out the flank and gives more and better meat. Colonel Goodnight has demonstrated beyond doubt that the catalo is a valuable animal and one that will continue to breed much longer than domestic cows. These facts and many others obtained by continuous and close observation have created a standard by which others can hope to succeed and avoid the costly mistakes of their predecessors."

"Colonel Goodnight has the largest herd of catalo in the world, and as he is well advanced in years and unable to continue or make further investigations, it would seem like a calamity for this herd to be broken up and dispersed. Should some individual, or better, the United States Government, take advantage of the opportunity and acquire the herd, they would not only have the result of forty years' experience, but would also avoid the difficulties and loss to be encountered in securing the first cross. This herd of fifty catalo is past the experimental stage, and only lacks the means for further improvement."

It is not generally realized that when North America was first explored by white men, they found buffaloes scattered all through the valleys of the Allegheny range of mountains, particularly in sections now known as Pennsylvania, Maryland and Virginia; they were also found in the Mississippi Valley. They were found in greatest numbers, however, upon the grass-covered plains between the Missouri River and the Rockies. Those east of the Mississippi were all killed off or driven westward by the end of the eighteenth century. By 1850 none were left east of the dry plains.

When the first transcontinental railroads were built the buffaloes were so plentiful that trains were frequently obliged to come to a halt for hours at a time, while herds of hundreds of thousands leisurely crossed the tracks.

In the old days buffalo herds were made up of small companies consisting of a patriarchal old bull, and cows and calves of varying ages. Thousands of these family companies would feed in the same region, all moving along slowly in one general direction, making it possible for travelers never to be out of sight of buffaloes during a whole day's journey. They seemed to have temperaments somewhat akin to those of gypsies, constantly wandering from one locality to another, ever on the lookout for something better in the eating line.

Upon the approach of winter a general movement always took place from the high sections to the warm valleys and plains of the South. In these journeys they invariably traveled single file, thus forming long narrow paths, which the natives referred to as "buffalo trails." Despite their clumsy bulk they swam rivers with ease and rambled about the mountains almost as easily as goats.

The sexes kept together throughout the year, and as usual among gregarious animals, there was constant fighting among the bulls for leadership, the old leaders being overthrown by younger and more vigorous aspirants as soon as their strength began to wane.

Maintaining a close herd was a matter of necessity in keeping off preying animals. Wolves were ever on the alert to pounce on a calf or weak old animal. The grizzly bear was the only beast able to whip a male buffalo in a fair open fight. When attacked the herd would quickly form a close crowd, with the cows and calves in the center, and the bulls forming a protecting circle around them, heads lowered ready for terrific action.



E. W. Nelson, Chief of the Biological Survey of the United States Department of Agriculture, inspecting the buffalo herd at the National Zoological Park, Washington, D. C.

exerting all possible efforts within their power to develop the breeding of buffaloes throughout the country. And furthermore, with this picture of gross wastefulness of other years before them, it might not be a bad idea for the present generation to pause for a few minutes and ponder over the prospective possibility of their children and grandchildren a few years hence reproaching them for their disregard of reasonable conservation even more than those of bygone generations are being reproached at this time.

The ability successfully to cross buffaloes with cattle will doubtless result in an immense and profitable de-